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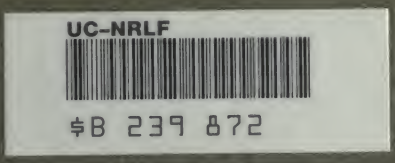

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FOURTH SUMMER MEETING.

THE WORK OF THE UNIVERSITIES FOR THE NATION

PAST AND PRESENT

THE INAUGURAL LECTURE
DELIVERED AT THE GUILDHALL, CAMBRIDGE
ON SATURDAY JULY 29 1893

BY

R. C. JEBB, LITT.D. M.P.

REGIUS PROFESSOR OF GREEK AND FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE

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THE WORK OF THE UNIVERSITIES FOR THE NATION, PAST AND PRESENT.

This meeting, to which the University welcomes her visitors, not as strangers or aliens, but as members of a body united to her by common studies and sympathies, is a visible expression of that change which, during the last thirty years, has been passing over the relations between the ancient Universities of England and the country. They are no longer content to be only, in the strict sense of the phrase, seats of learning; they now desire to be

also mother-cities of intellectual colonies, and to spread the influence of their teaching throughout the land. It is indeed instructive to contrast this impulse with that feeling with which we meet in earlier ages, that any addition to the number of centres at which a higher education could be obtained was a menace to academic monopoly. In mediaeval times, when a body of Cambridge students withdrew to Northampton, Henry III., who had at first regarded the movement as likely to benefit the town to which they went, was presently induced to condemn it, as an infringement of privilege elsewhere; and when Oxford students migrated to Stamford, they were peremptorily recalled by Edward III. In the days of the Commonwealth, the Master of Caius College, William Dell, proposed that the studies of

Oxford and Cambridge should be established also in the large towns of the west and north: the scheme was rejected, however, for a reason which, though valid at the time, was precisely opposite to that which in our own day has recommended University Extension; it was held that such a measure would tend to diminish the influence of the Universities. The modern developments of railway travelling were necessary to render Extension, as we understand it, even possible; but, before the opportunity could be used, something more vital was required,—the rise of a new spirit.

And this suggests that it may be not uninteresting to consider how far, and in what sense, that spirit is new; what, in the past, has been the attitude of the Universities towards the nation; and how

far, at different periods, they have performed a national work. This is the subject with which I shall attempt, however slightly and imperfectly, to deal. It is scarcely necessary to observe that the sketch must be confined to salient points.

Rise of Universities in Europe.

The Universities of Europe sprang from a spontaneous and enthusiastic desire for knowledge. During the dark ages, from the fall of the Western Empire to the eleventh century, such education as existed was given in the schools attached to monasteries and cathedrals. Though some outlines of pagan literature were preserved, the subjects taught were mainly such as formed a direct preparation for the calling of the priest or the monk. Towards the end of this period, new studies began to press for recognition, partly through the stimulus given to Europe by contact with

the more civilised East, a result to which the Crusades contributed. The practical studies of Medicine and of Law became more extended. The rudiments of physical science, and some branches of Mathematics, came more clearly into view. At the beginning of the twelfth century, the study of Dialectic, based on parts of the Aristotelian Logic, received a notable impulse. Its claim rested not only on its intrinsic value as a mental discipline, but upon its assumed relation to Theology. A belief was diffused, which some famous controversies of the time had strengthened, that spiritual truth could not be rightly apprehended except through certain forms of reasoning. This conception was the basis of what was afterwards known as the scholastic philosophy. Scholasticism began by dealing with certain problems of the

The scholastic philosophy.

Aristotelian Logic (or what passed for such), and then applied its processes to Theology. The task which it ultimately undertook was that of reconciling the doctrines of the Church with human reason. This explains why, in the middle age, Dialectic was regarded as the paramount science, the highest which could engage man's intellect; since it was not only the handmaid of Theology, but in a certain sense the key to it.

The question now was, where could these new subjects be adequately studied? The ordinary range of instruction in the monastic and cathedral schools was too narrow to admit them. A few religious houses there were, doubtless, in which churchmen of exceptional gifts and attainments responded in some measure to the new desire; but these were inadequate to

satisfy the wants of the age. Associations began to be formed, specially devoted to purposes of study. Such an association was commonly designated by one of two names; *Studium Generale*, meaning a place of study not merely local, but open to all comers; or *Universitas*, a corporation or guild, implying that teachers and learners formed a definitely incorporated body. The term *Universitas* being a general one, this special sense of it was defined by some addition; we find such phrases as *Universitas Magistrorum et scholarium*, a corporation of masters and scholars; or *Universitas literaria*. It was not probably till the close of the fourteenth century that the word *Universitas* came to be commonly used alone, in the sense of 'University.'

Studium Generale and Universitas.

The earliest example of such a body dates from a time antecedent to the general

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awakening of the European mind, and is associated with the most indispensable of the practical sciences. The school of Medicine at Salerno in Southern Italy can be traced to the ninth century. But the twelfth century is that in which the first great Universities of Europe take their rise. Two of these are respectively typical of different tendencies in the higher teaching of the age. The University of Paris became the great school of Dialectic and Theology: it represents especially the desire for a general mental training, with a speculative bent. The University of Bologna, famous for the study of the civil and canon law, gave the foremost place to the idea of a professional training, with a definite practical aim.

Paris.

Bologna.

The English Universities.

Paris was the model upon which the English Universities were founded. Be-

fore the end of the twelfth century, Giraldus Cambrensis could describe Oxford as the place 'where the clergy in England chiefly flourished, and excelled in clerkly lore.' The earliest history of our own University is more obscure; but it, too, probably had its origin in the twelfth century, in connection with teaching carried on by the canons of the Church of St Giles; and in 1209 we hear of some students migrating from Oxford to Cambridge. But it is not until we come to the era of the earliest Cambridge Colleges that there is any full or clear light. Throughout the middle age, Oxford was the representative University of England; and not only that, but at one time the rival, and in some respects the superior, of Paris. There are, however, indications enough to show that the

development of mediaeval Cambridge was following the same general course.

First period: from about 1216 to 1350 A.D.

The first period which we may take in the history of the English Universities starts from the time when they begin to have a distinct influence on the national life,—viz., from the early part of the thirteenth century,—and goes down to about the middle of the fourteenth. It answers roughly to the reigns of Henry III. and the first two Edwards, with the first half or so of Edward III.'s. This was the golden age of the scholastic philosophy. At this period Oxford produced a series of famous schoolmen, among whom Roger Bacon, Duns Scotus, and William of Occam are only some of the most prominent,—doctors celebrated throughout Christendom. Nor were the studies confined to scholasticism, though that was in the foreground; all

Oxford.

other knowledge that the age possessed was pursued with ardour. Never since, perhaps, has any seat of learning given proofs of a more eager or varied activity than is attested by this long succession of brilliant Oxonians, many of whom were Franciscans. At this time the English Universities represented the best intellect and the highest knowledge that existed in the country. All men who cared for mental cultivation at all looked to them as the centres of education. Their attractive power was the more widely felt because the Church then offered the most varied avenues to advancement in life; indeed, there was no other road to it, except a military career. Many of us, perhaps, when we look back upon the mediaeval University, might be apt to think that after all it had little but the name in

The Universities really national.

common with the University of to-day. In one sense, of course, this is true. An impassable gulf divides them in respect to material surroundings, to aims and methods of study, to the whole fabric of government and society. But, if we revert to the idea in which Universities had their origin, we find that the English University of the thirteenth century fulfilled the essence of it; it possessed the highest culture of the age; and it was recognised by the nation as the exponent of that culture.

This position rested primarily on the dominance of the scholastic philosophy, which, in turn, presupposed the unity of Christendom. It is no paradox to say that, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, it was necessary for a University to be international before it could be worthily national. Its rank depended on the eminence of its

teachers in studies which were acknowledged as paramount throughout Europe, and which were pursued in the common language of learning, the Latin. At Paris this cosmopolitan character appears in the four 'nations' of that University, the French, the Norman, the Picard, and the English. At Oxford and Cambridge there were only two nations, representing respectively the North and the South of England; but we hear of students from Paris migrating to both our Universities; and the number of foreign students, especially at Oxford, must at one time have been considerable.

From 1350 to 1500 A.D.

With the second half of the fourteenth century, however, we enter upon a new period of our academic annals, in the course of which the attitude of the Universities towards the nation was gradually

but profoundly changed. This stage may be roughly defined as extending from about 1350 to 1500.

Decay of Scholasticism.

The first great fact which meets us here is the incipient decay of the scholastic philosophy. It declined, not because any formidable rival had appeared in the field of intellectual interests, but because the age was slowly coming to perceive that scholasticism had failed in the sublime task which had inspired the dreams of its youthful ambition. It had not succeeded in reconciling the doctrines of the Church with human reason. The extraordinary enthusiasm and devotion which it had so long commanded sprang from the belief that, in the domain of knowledge, this philosophy was a sort of counterpart to the Holy Roman Empire in the sphere of government, and that, as the Emperor

was in the old phrase the 'advocate' of the Church, so the cultivation of the intellect reached its climax in those studies where the Dialectic bequeathed by Greece became the secular arm of Theology. But theologians from one point of view, and logicians from another, came to see that the alliance had broken down; semi-mysticism on the one part, inchoate scepticism on the other, became the refuge of disappointment. And, when the scholastic philosophy was once separated from its loftiest purpose, what was it? An armoury of slowly rusting weapons, which could no more do service in the greatest of the causes for which they had been elaborated. The weary guardians of the armoury might shift the places of those weapons on the dusty walls, and make some show of keeping them decently keen and bright;

but they could not feel the joyous energy of the soldier who had sharpened and burnished them for battle. Long afterwards, Erasmus expressed what the fourteenth century had already begun to feel, when, asking how Christendom was to set about converting Turks, he said—'Shall we put into their hands an Occam, a Durandus, a Scotus, a Gabriel, or an Alvarus? What will they think of us, when they hear of our perplexed subtleties about Instants, Formalities, Quiddities, and Relations?'

Considered merely as an instrument of mental discipline, the scholastic philosophy had done good work for the age in which it arose; it has left, indeed, an abiding mark on the language and the thought of Europe; but it was now passing into a system of lifeless formulas and mechanical exercises. Thus the Universities were

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losing—slowly but surely—that which had once been their sovereign attraction. And at the same time they were denied an outlet for new activities. Wyclif's gallant struggle at Oxford was defeated. His death in 1384 marks a turning-point. Religious freedom was suppressed, but at the cost of intellectual life. The crusade against Lollardism introduced an age of torpor and sterility at the Universities. Indeed, the Latin philosophy was gradually silencing itself. And a decided divorce between the Universities and the nation was now setting in. The laity felt less interest in the paralysed studies of the academic schools, which were tending to become little more than clerical seminaries. The numbers of the students were dwindling. Already the study of Medicine was withdrawing to the large towns; the study

of Law was dropping off to the Inns of Court. It is also a significant circumstance that the second half of the 14th century coincides with an advance in the literary use of the English language, as represented by Chaucer and Gower, and by Wyclif himself. This fact does not in itself imply any antagonism to the Universities, but it reminds us that a national literature was now growing which was independent of their influence.

Rise of the Colleges.

Thus far we have contemplated what may be called the negative side of the period from 1350 to 1500. The Universities were beginning to lose their hold upon the nation; their old mental life was failing. But there is another side to this period, and one which gives it a strong claim upon our interest. This was the era at which the power of the

Colleges was slowly rising. Of our seventeen Cambridge Colleges, only one was founded before 1300, and only three were founded after 1550. At Oxford, three Colleges arose before 1300; and though a larger number of foundations than here came after 1550, still we may say that, at both Universities, the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries form the period during which the power of the Colleges was chiefly consolidated. The general intention of the earliest Colleges was that they should be boarding-houses, with a discipline so organised that the inmates should lead a studious and decorous life,—special provision being made for those who required pecuniary aid. Many Colleges were designed more especially for the secular clergy, as the monastic and mendicant orders were

already so amply endowed. We must remember that the multitude of students at a mediaeval university was a fluctuating and often turbulent mass. The great value of the Collegiate system, when it first came in, lay not so much in the pecuniary assistance which it gave, as in the security which it afforded for discipline and good order. It was an element of permanence and cohesion for the whole academic body. The teaching function, it may be added, did not belong to the original idea of a College, except in so far as the older residents might be expected to aid or guide the studies of the younger; a College teaching-staff was a later development, due to the altered status of the University schools.

The new classical learning:

While the Universities, as such, long continued to be identified with the mori-

bund scholasticism, the Colleges, from the fifteenth century onwards, were more especially identified with the new learning, —with the classical revival. At the time of Wyclif's death, that revival was passing, in Italy, through its earliest phase, under the immediate followers of Petrarch, who felt the new delight of discovery. In the first half of the fifteenth century, the groups gathered around Cosmo de' Medici at Florence, or Nicholas V. at Rome, were busied in arranging the discovered materials; and before 1500 criticism had been carried further, chiefly by Italian societies and academies. In due time this new humanism spread to England. But we observe a striking difference between the conditions under which this movement reached us, and those which had

its advent, compared with that of scholasticism.

surrounded the advent of its great predecessor, the scholastic philosophy, in the twelfth century. That philosophy had hardly begun its course when, owing to the intervention of the Dominicans and Franciscans, it was enabled to advance under the banners of the Church. No equivalent patronage protected or encouraged the first endeavours of our English humanists. It was not until the middle of Henry VIII.'s reign that the humanities began to enjoy the doubtful advantage of official favour; and then the classical muse might already have responded—if only she had dared—in the tone of Dr Johnson's reply to the tardy civilities of Lord Chesterfield. The restored classical learning was planted in England by the enterprise and zeal of a few individuals, such as that series of

Hellenists whom Oxford can show at the close of the fifteenth century,—Selling, Lilly, Grocyn, Latimer, Linacre; such as Cambridge, again, produced in the immediately subsequent period,—Richard Croke, Thomas Smith, and that able scholar, whom Ascham and Milton commemorate, Sir John Cheke. The Colleges sheltered most of those who brought the new learning into England. These foundations afforded opportunities for private study,—and it must be recollected that the new learning, Greek especially, carried the suspicion of heresy;—they also facilitated foreign travel, which was then almost indispensable for the purpose. But the classics, though the circle of those interested in them became continually larger, could not exercise such a widespread or popular influence as once belonged

Oxford and Cambridge Hellenists.

to the old mediaeval studies. The strongholds of humanism, again, the Colleges, —as their permanent character, their wealth, and the ability of their administrators gradually made them predominant, —represented an aristocratic or at least oligarchic agency, engrafted upon the once democratic existence of the mediaeval university. Thus, in the second half of the fifteenth century, internal causes were tending to detach the Universities from the general life of the nation, while at the same time the number of other interests and careers was expanding.

The Colleges.

Erasmus.

The early years of the sixteenth century are made memorable for Cambridge by the residence here of Erasmus, from the end of 1510 to the end of 1513. In his earlier stay at Oxford, he had enjoyed most congenial and instructive friendships;

but here, at least, he did some of his ripest and hardest work,—kindling the minds of disciples, too, who carried on the tradition. It was in the old tower of Queens' College that he completed a collation of the Greek text of the New Testament; and four years later his edition—the first ever published—appeared at Basle. It was in this University, and in the years just after the visit of Erasmus, that the Reformation had its English birth. It was a time, too, when Cambridge men were zealously continuing those classical studies in which the Hellenists of Oxford had been pioneers. It is interesting to recall what Erasmus wrote in 1520 to Everard, the Stadtholder of Holland: 'Theology is flourishing at Paris and at Cambridge as nowhere else; and why? Because they are adapting themselves to the tendencies

The Reformation.

Cambridge in 1520 A.D.

of the age; because the new studies, which are ready, if need be, to storm an entrance, are not repelled by them as foes, but received as welcome guests.' John Skelton was even moved to satirise the zeal for Greek which prevailed at Cambridge in 1521.

But this fair promise was too soon overclouded. A time of unrest and anxiety was at hand. Poverty and discontent, legacies from the past century, were widespread in the land; the Church was wealthy, and powerless to defend its wealth; the Universities were identified, in the public eye, with the Church, and, like it, were in danger of spoliation. Oxford and Cambridge were glad to have Wolsey's protection; and after his fall, it was of vital moment to them to win the favour of the king. The king did indeed stand

Danger of the Universities.

their friend: when courtiers urged that the Universities should be plundered, he declared that he judged no land in England better bestowed than that which was devoted to the uses of learning. But in return he exacted submission to his will. The visitation of the Universities by Thomas Cromwell's Commissioners took place in 1535, when the Royal Injunctions were issued. They imposed the acceptance of the royal supremacy, abolishing the lectures and degrees in the canon law. They prescribed the study of Latin and Greek, and of the Old and New Testaments, to the exclusion of the old scholastic text-books. These Injunctions may indeed be regarded as formally marking the fall of scholasticism. They constitute an official boundary-line between the mediaeval learning and the new.

Royal Injunctions of 1535.

The years 1535—1559.

But the reform failed to bear good fruit. During the years from 1535 to Mary's death in 1559 the Universities were at a low ebb. At first, no doubt, the level of their work seemed to be rising. But Henry had narrowly circumscribed their intellectual freedom; they were suffering from poverty; and they were distracted by all the fierce controversies of the time. A mischief of a new kind had also crept in. After the expulsion of the religious orders, youths of the richer classes began once more to frequent the Universities, as their parents had no longer to fear the influence of monk or friar. Thus in 1549 Latimer said, referring to Cambridge, 'There be none now but great men's sons in College, and their fathers look not to have them preachers.' Academic corruption followed. Roger Ascham says, 'Talent, learning,

poverty and discretion all went for nothing..., when interest, favour, and letters from the great exerted their pressure from without.' Perhaps the Universities were never less truly national than in those years.

Elizabeth's reign opened a new era. Not that it was a brilliant period in academic studies. With the partial exception of Theology, no branch of learning was really flourishing at the ancient seats. However, a decided change came about in the general position of the Universities. For two centuries, they had been more or less isolated; and the internal forces which shaped them had been mainly ecclesiastical. These conditions were now sensibly modified. Elizabeth, whose gifts and attainments disposed her to appear as a patroness of letters, showed much favour to the Uni-

Elizabethan age (1559—1603).

versities. In the year of Shakespeare's birth (1564) she made a visit of five days to Cambridge, and not long afterwards bestowed a like honour upon Oxford. By these and similar acts she increased the social prestige of the Universities. Now, too, they came into closer contact with the life of the capital. In London there was a world of letters which, though it received many recruits from Oxford and Cambridge, was by no means academic in character. A stream of popular literature now began to flow from London to the Universities. Frequent intercourse sprang up between University students and the town wits, and was promoted by the fact that University men were continually passing into the ranks of the Inns of Court. It may be conjectured that the results were not altogether good for academic discipline;

but there was some real gain in the literary impulse given to the Universities. It was also better that they should be drawn more into the currents of a wider and fuller life, even though those currents were sometimes turbid, than they should remain in isolation. Elizabeth's reign was a time in which the Universities were tending to acquire a certain character of exclusiveness,—not, indeed, in any very narrow sense, but relatively to the nation at large. On the other hand it was certainly a time when they resumed something of their old relations with a world larger and more varied than their own.

The 17th century.

At the opening of the seventeenth century we find the Universities enjoying, under James I., a continuance of royal favour. But they were not prospering as seats of learning. Much as James relished

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theological disputations and College plays, his first object in regard to Oxford and Cambridge was that they should uphold the royal supremacy in matters of religious belief. Under all the Stuart monarchs the case was the same; the first thing asked of Oxford and Cambridge was that they should inculcate sound doctrines in Church and State: their condition in respect of learning was a secondary matter. In the Great Rebellion both the Universities were royalist; and the Barebones Parliament once discussed the propriety of suppressing them altogether. Milder counsels prevailed, and under the Protectorate it was resolved that 'the Universities and schools shall be so countenanced and reformed as that they may become the nurseries of piety and learning.' Shortly afterwards, however, a more

rigorous plan was mooted,—viz., that the number of Colleges in each University should be cut down to three, answering respectively to the faculties of Divinity, Law, and Physic. The Restoration quickly averted that peril; and the Revolution, in its turn, delivered the Universities from those strained exercises of royal prerogative in which the last two Stuart kings occasionally indulged. Certainly the seventeenth century was not one in which it could be expected that the average level of academic life should be a high one. And yet, throughout that century, the two old seats of learning were producing a long series of men whose intellectual achievements in various fields are among the chief glories of England. It may be hard to say what exact share of credit is due, in any of these cases, to the *Alma*

Mater; but it is reasonable to believe that in no instance can her influence have been wholly sterile. Cambridge can point to such names as those of Bacon, William Harvey, Milton, Barrow, Newton, Bentley; then there are the Oxford and Cambridge divines who bore part in the Authorised Version of the Bible, or helped to build up the standard Anglican theology; the Oxford group who founded the Royal Society; the Cambridge Platonists, who sought, in a spirit very different from that of the schoolmen, to reconcile religion with philosophy and science, to soften the strife of sects, and to bring out the essential things of Christianity. When one looks back on that century as a whole,—on the turmoils and contrasts of its outer life, and on the results of its mental activity,—one is inclined to apply the old

Greek saying to our academic commonwealths; 'It is not the walls that make the city, but the men.'

The 18th century.

The age which came next has usually been regarded as that in which the English Universities were least alive to their national duties and responsibilities. I shall not attempt to offer a defence for the academic shortcomings of the eighteenth century. But, if the censure is not to be too sweeping, it is well to observe certain points. First—we should remember that those studies which Universities seek to foster cannot really thrive unless they are animated by at least some touch of ardour, some spark of a generous enthusiasm. They are sensitive to the atmosphere about them, and are apt to be chilled by a surrounding apathy. The eighteenth century, correct, judicious, ob-

servant of measure and obedient to common sense, gave little encouragement to large aspirations or lofty ideals. These, however, are the breath of life to young students, and most of all to the best. Never, perhaps, did scholars work with greater intensity than the great schoolmen of the thirteenth century;—Duns Scotus, for instance, dying, it is said, at thirty-four, left the equivalent of thirteen printed folios;—and they could do so, because the ideal before them was so grand. The eighteenth century was in this respect at the opposite pole from the thirteenth. There was little in it to feed the sacred fire. If the Universities were torpid, their fault was at least so far the less, that they were breathing an unfavourable air. In the next place, it should be noted that the torpor was not

unbroken or universal. Like the heroes in the battles of the Iliad, the two Universities have their respective moments of pre-eminence; and in regard to the eighteenth century, an impartial inquirer will conclude, I think, that Cambridge, though very far from blameless, held some advantage. There were two principal reasons for this. First, that century opened here with a period during which Bentley and Newton were giving a powerful impulse to studies old and new. Chairs of Astronomy, Anatomy, Geology, and Botany were founded between 1702 and 1727. Secondly, there was at least one study, that of Mathematics, which was pursued here with real industry and success during at least the second half of the century; when a great improvement was also effected in the tests of mathematical attainment. Yet it is not to

be denied that, on the whole, both Universities then fell far short of any standard which could be deemed worthy of their position; nor is it a sufficient plea that, during the eighteenth century, they can claim so many sons distinguished in letters, science, or active careers.

Early part of this century.

Institutions are seldom at their worst when the outcry against them is loudest. Before public opinion reaches the point which threatens interference from without, conscience and prudence usually make themselves heard within. During the first third of this century, steps were taken at both the Universities to improve the quality and enlarge the scope of their work; and if these steps did not go very far, at least they were laudable in their way. Meanwhile the voice of censure, which had been almost silent in the eighteenth century, became

more importunate. Its tone was such as we find in these words of Dugald Stewart, which were pointed especially at the English Universities:—'The academical establishments of some parts of Europe,' he said, 'are not without their use to the historian of the human mind. Immovably moored to the same station by the strength of their cables and the weight of their anchors, they enable him to measure the rapidity of the current by which the rest of mankind is borne along.' The time of the first Reform Bill is that at which the unpopularity of Oxford and Cambridge began to be general. In a series of articles contributed to the 'Edinburgh Review,' Sir William Hamilton framed an indictment against them which attracted much attention. Within the Universities themselves, the more active minds were fully alive to the necessity for

The demand for reform.

further improvement. Foremost among these was Adam Sedgwick, whose 'Discourse on the Studies of the University of Cambridge' appeared in 1833. A Cambridge graduate who published in 1836 a letter[1] on the 'Condition, Abuses, and Capabilities of the National Universities,' remarks that, if he ventures to point out defects, he will be asked 'whether he wishes that our youth should be better educated than Bacon, Locke, and Newton'; but he makes it clear that his own opinions were shared by many Cambridge residents. To foreign observers the peril of our academic situation was equally manifest. Huber, a Professor at Marburg, published his History of the English Universities in 1839. He was a lenient judge; sometimes even too

[1] It will be found in a volume of 'Tracts' in the University Library, Bb. 26, 33.

lenient. But he recognises the existence of a hostile feeling against Oxford and Cambridge, which is proclaimed, he says, 'in every variety of tone and manner, and from the most different quarters.'

The two chief defects.

Let us note the causes of this feeling. First, there had been, since the seventeenth century, a great expansion in science and literature, with which the Universities had not kept pace. They no longer adequately represented the knowledge of the age, or the best intellect of the nation. Secondly, the instruction which they did give—and in some subjects it was better than it had ever been before—was virtually limited to certain classes of society, defined partly by wealth, and partly by religious opinion. That moment was the earliest at which it had become apparent to the country at large that, in both these senses, the Uni-

versities failed to be national. And the perception was quickened by the new democratic tendencies.

A German criticism:

It is curious to observe what Huber —a friendly critic—regarded as the one tenable ground of defence. He says, in effect: 'The end for which the English Universities have long existed has not been to form learned men, or able professional men, or State officials, as our German Universities do; it has been to produce that first and most distinctive flower of English national life, an English gentleman; a product to which we on the Continent have nothing really similar; the nearest approach to it is a Castilian *caballero*.' No doubt there were many people in England—men inspired with a lofty idea of what a University ought to be—who, when they read those words of the German

historian, felt in them a severe, though unconscious, irony. And yet, if we wish to be quite just to the work which the Universities did for the nation from 1600 to 1850, we are bound to recognise the element of truth which Huber's remark contains. Seats of education, which for centuries have existed in the midst of a vigorous people, can never be colourless embodiments of a desire for knowledge; they are necessarily influenced, in different ways at different periods, by the national genius of that people. And it belongs to the genius of the English people—in modern days at any rate—to value character more than intellect, and ability more than learning. Hence there have long been currents of influence, bearing on the Universities from outside, which have tended to a sort of compromise between

how far true.

Bent of the English genius.

the function proper to a University and that function of social education which can also be performed by a good regiment, or by any other society in which young men act and re-act upon each other under the two-fold sway of a public opinion controlled by themselves and a discipline above them. When allowance has been made for all shortcomings, it must be granted that the English Universities have not only rendered great services to learning and science, but have also done good work for the nation by forming characters in which at least some measure of liberal education has been combined with manliness.

That, however, is no longer the only ground upon which they can claim to be national. The successive reforms which have been accomplished since 1850 have been directed to remedying or mitigating

Reforms since 1850.

the two principal defects, narrowness of study, and narrowness of social operation. The range of studies has been immensely enlarged; and though much remains to be done, it may be said of both Universities that at no previous time have they been the seats of intellectual work at once so highly organised and so varied. Within the last twenty-five years, too, their doors have been opened to whole classes of the community against which they were once closed.

Attitude towards national education.

But the historian of the future will see something still more distinctive of our time in the spirit which has moved the Universities to take up a new position in regard to national education beyond their own precincts. In the course of the thirty-five years since the Local Examinations were established, the Universities have done much

Local Examinations.

towards elevating and organising secondary education in the schools concerned, and have thus contributed something, at least, towards supplying what is still the chief need in our educational system. Larger and more fruitful still has been the working of that later but essentially kindred movement which, twenty years ago, this University, moved by Mr James Stuart, had the honour of initiating, and which both the old Universities, in alliance with younger but vigorous agencies, are now prosecuting in generous emulation. To an audience such as this, comprising many of those whose untiring energy and distinguished ability have made University Extension what it is—comprising, as it also does, a yet larger number of those who have tasted the benefits of the movement—it is superfluous to speak in detail of conditions, methods, and results

The Extension movement.

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with which none are so intimately acquainted as themselves. Looking at the movement in its broad aspects, we see that the missionary enterprise of the Universities is imparting a new stimulus to the country, and is labouring to satisfy the demand which has been recognised or created. No task can be more patriotic than that of knitting the whole community together by common mental associations and enjoyments. 'Surely as Nature createth brotherhood in families,' said Bacon, 'so in like manner there cannot but be fraternity in learning and illuminations.' But the benefits are not all upon one side. If the Universities give, they also receive. Many of their ablest men, the leaders and workers in this movement, testify that they have learned lessons which could have been acquired in no other way. The Universities

themselves, as we venture to hope, are gradually winning a place in the affections of the country which must needs be the best of incentives to good work.

The present need.

The great object now is to place University Extension on a more permanent and systematic basis. The difficulty is simply want of funds. The Universities, as such, are far from rich, relatively to the claims upon them; and if farther financial aid is to come from an academic source, it is to be looked for rather in the following of that admirable example which has been set by more than one College. The case for aid from the State is a strong one, and has been stated more than once with a force to which nothing can be added. It has been pointed out that the State spends three millions a year on Elementary Education, and that a small grant

—say £5000 a year—to University Extension,—a grant which might in the first instance be temporary and tentative,—would greatly increase the value of the return which the country obtains for the larger expenditure. Elementary instruction, unless crowned by something higher, is not only barren, but may even be dangerous. It is not well to teach our democracy to read, unless we also teach it to think. The County Councils' grants go at present to one side of the movement only,—the technical and scientific; and, far from weakening the argument for some further State aid, they really strengthen it. Such thoughts naturally occur to the mind at such a gathering as this; but no uncertainty which may hang over the future can diminish the feelings of gratification at past success, and of good augury for fur-

ther development, which such an occasion is fitted to inspire.

In conclusion, I would only venture to express the earnest hope that this summer meeting may prove no unworthy successor, in every benefit and enjoyment which such an experience can afford, to the meetings which have preceded it; and that our visitors, whom the University so warmly welcomes, may find here, in the temporary home of their studies, something of that mysterious influence which nowhere does its spiriting more gently than in a venerable seat of learning,—the genius of the place. True it is that in these ancient courts and halls, in the cloisters and the gardens, the charm which one feels is inseparably blended with a certain strain of melancholy. How often, in the long course of the centuries, have these haunts been

associated, not only with the efforts which triumphed and the labours which bore lasting fruit, but also with the lost causes and the impossible loyalties, with the theories which were overthrown, with the visions which faded, with the brave and patient endeavours which ended in failure and defeat! Nevertheless, this place speaks to us of a corporate intellectual life which has been continuous; not always, indeed, free from the incubus of superstition or the heavy hand of external despotism; not always exempt from a depressing lethargy within; yet always preserving some secret spring of recuperative vigour, and thus linking the present with the past by a tradition which has in a great measure run parallel with the fortunes of England. And now, when these scenes, so dear to those whose life is passed among them, are

animated by the presence of visitors who have already experienced the influences which Cambridge fosters, there is no one here who will not feel that the familiar features of our old academic home have a light upon them which our fathers never saw,—the light kindled by this new and living sympathy between the Universities and the nation.

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